

# Quechua and Spanish, evidentiality and aspect: Commentary on Liliana Sánchez

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Liliana Sánchez' paper is a welcome contribution to the growing body of literature on Andean Spanish (cf. a recent survey in Muysken, 2004a), welcome both because a well-motivated and clearly described methodology is used and because it is embedded in an explicit theoretical framework. I do not have reservations about the overall conclusions of the study, but would like to draw attention to three issues: grammatical encoding versus pragmatic inference, the completeness of the analysis, and the issue of form learning versus meaning construction.

The issue of grammatical encoding versus pragmatic inference is a complex one. It concerns the question to what extent a given meaning really is directly expressed by a given grammatical form (e.g. mirative evidentiality by the imperfective aspect marker), and to what extent it is induced by the context. Thus, the English present tense can have past tense reference in specific contexts (e.g. in narratives in the historical present), but this is not directly encoded in the meaning of the tense as such, presumably. The issue is adumbrated by the author in her treatment of Spanish imperfective, but then does not reappear until example (14), where she simply lists features. The functional category approach taken by Sánchez does not easily translate into a model where some meanings are induced pragmatically rather than coded grammatically. A set of hypotheses to be tested here could be that L1 grammaticalized notions appear in L2 varieties as notions conveyed indirectly, through pragmatic inference, while L2 notions directly influence L1 grammatical categories.

A second issue is the completeness of the analysis. In Quechua there are three morpho-syntactic subsystems involved: Aspect, Tense, and Evidentiality. There is a number of aspectual 'derivational' affixes with a variety of meanings (the derivational affix *ru* should not be seen as an allomorph of past inflectional *rqa*, as suggested by Sánchez). The list of aspectual elements (in a broad sense) given by Weber (1989) for Huallaga (Huánuco) Quechua (not the variety studied by Sánchez, but one of the best studied) includes:

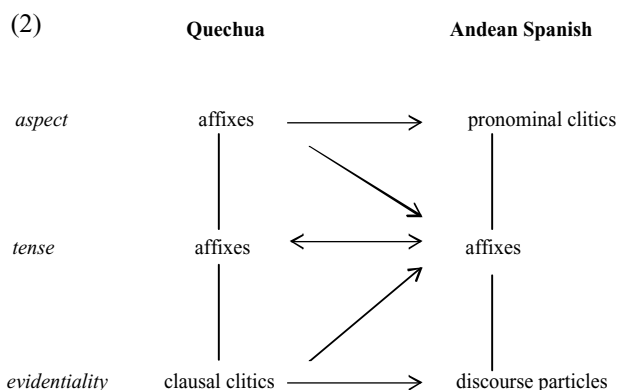
- (1) yku perfective vs. yka: 'imperfective'  
ri 'punctual' vs. ra: 'durative'  
paku 'diffuse' vs. chaku 'concentratedly'

ykacha:/kacha:/cha: 'iterative'  
ka:ku 'completely'  
rqu 'mirative, suddenly'

In other varieties other affixes may be involved. In any case, there is a broad range of aktionsart, pluri-actionality, and aspectual meanings expressed by this class of suffixes in most varieties of Quechua. In addition, there is the paradigm of the tense markers as such, with present, past, reportative past, and future, and the paradigm of evidential clausal clitics with affirmative, reportative, and conjectural as the prime categories.

In Spanish there is also a number of the verbal tenses and aspects. In addition, there is a non-grammaticalized or at best semi-grammaticalized set of discourse particles such as *dice* 'says', also present in some of the examples cited by Sánchez, to convey evidential information. Finally, aspectual information may also be conveyed through the use of verbal clitic pronouns such as *lo* [3sg masculine], claimed by Cerrón Palomino (p.c.) to sometimes function as the equivalent of *rqu* 'mirative, suddenly', or *se* [reflexive], which may be used inchoatively.

Given that three grammatical subsystems are involved in each of the two languages, with varying status and degree of semantic amalgamation, a complex set of interactions can be assumed:



Within each language there are links between aspect and tense and between evidentiality and tense. Quechua aspect and evidentiality have influenced Andean Spanish forms, and may also have influenced the Andean Spanish

tense system, as argued by Sánchez. Finally, the Spanish tense system may have influenced Quechua tense; this remains to be established. Altogether, the schema in (2) suggests that a much more comprehensive study in this area, building on Sánchez' work, would be fruitful.

The third issue I would like to address concerns the issue of form learning versus meaning construction. In traditional L2 learning research, all attention was focused on the acquisition of Spanish verb forms, without much concern for their use and meaning in interlanguage. Here the completely opposite route is taken: all attention is directed at the meaning of verbs, without taking their morphological formal properties into account. In a single fragment of bilingual Spanish from Ecuador, I recorded the following forms as alternative morphological realizations, all denoting first person singular generic present:

- |              |   |
|--------------|---|
| (3) buscando | 'look.for gerund'                               |
| encontramos  | 'find 1pl present'                              |
| ir           | 'go infinitive'                                 |
| cargando     | 'carry gerund'                                  |
| indo         | 'go gerund < yendo'                             |
| caminando    | 'walk gerund'                                   |
| juindo       | 'go gerund < *fui-ndo (gerund from perfective)' |
| jué          | 'go 3sg perfective < fué'                       |
| cojo         | 'take 1sg present'                              |
| saco         | 'take.out 1sg present'                          |

Admittedly, this is a beginning learner, unlike the children recorded by Sánchez. Nonetheless, these data illustrate that verb morphology does not come automatically: some forms may be harder for the child to learn than others, and this could influence the results. There are some irregular forms in the material, e.g. *habé* 'had' in Sánchez' example

(53), hinting at this. More significantly, the bilingual children substituted imperfective forms for perfective forms in the target, while only the monolingual Spanish children substituted perfective forms for imperfective forms. As an interlanguage speaker of Spanish myself I would like to venture the hypothesis that the imperfective may be easier for the children to acquire than the perfective, and hence the substitutions. An item analysis could reveal whether indeed perfective verbs in the bilingual data involve mostly frequent and fairly robust forms like *hizo* 'made' and *vino* 'came', and not forms such as *dió* 'gave', which in addition has an unexpected accentual pattern for a Quechua speaker (Quechua has regular penultimate stress). Gradual morphological simplification could easily lead to semantic restructuring, the perspective taken by Sánchez, but the latter becomes much more comprehensible in the light of the former. This is the perspective taken in Muysken (2004b), where the spread of the gerund in Ecuadorean bilingual Spanish is considered in several dimensions.

These three issues may be taken into account in further research in this area, which becomes richer and more complex each time it is explored in greater depth, as in the work by Liliana Sánchez commented on here.

## References

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